

Washington County Museum
Oral History Interview with Ariadna Covarrubias Ornelas
Date: June 12, 2013

Informants: Ariadna Covarrubias Ornelas

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LS: Luke Sprunger
AC: Ariadna Covarrubias

LS: This is Luke Sprunger for the Washington County Museum. I'm also Public History graduate at Portland State University. It is June 12th, 2013. We are at the City Council building at Cornelius, Oregon. Today I'm interviewing Ariadna Covarrubias. She was born in 1992. She's 21 years old. She's a Biochemistry student.

Let's talk about your early childhood and your life in Michoacán.

AC: Growing up it was interesting because I didn't really have set rules. My mother was raising the oldest of my brother and me by herself most of the time. And she couldn't really take care of both of us at the same time so they felt I needed to take care of the oldest of my brothers. I was the first one born and on my mother's side I was the first granddaughter so I got spoiled a lot because I was treated as the special one as the only daughter, as the only female there. And my brother would get spoiled because he was the only boy, the only grandchild born at that time.

I remember going to and from my grandmother's house once a week. It was a pretty long walk. I remember my mother waking us up early in the morning so we wouldn't catch the blazing sun. She lived in kind of like a small ranch. It was just mostly peach trees, avocado trees and a few cornstalks. I'm not sure if they sold them or not. It was mostly I think for them.

Going to school it was early in the morning Monday to Friday. It was kind of the same as it is here. We didn't have any free meals. We would get to eat from whatever our parents give us. They would either give us money or pack our lunches and the lunch was usually provided by someone cooking the food and then selling it to us.

The books and few school supplies were given to us free by the government. That was one of the few things that was nice about public school that we didn't have to buy our own school supplies. We did have to buy uniforms but the books and one or two notebooks, pencils, erasers, sharpeners—that was given to us by the government.

I had a few friends.

LS: Can you describe what going to school was like and what the physical school in Michoacán was like?

ACO: School started about, I want to say 8:00 in the morning. There was no transportation provided by the school, to and from the school so we would get in—it was kind of like a large white van and we would pay the driver. He would drive us close enough to the school, just a one minute walk from where he stopped to the school. There was no actual stops per se. I don't remember if there were stops or it was just like the school and the city next to the town I lived in. But it was about 20 to 30 minute walk back. We would not take the same transportation back to town because there was no stop signs. There were no signs signaling that students would cross there. There had been a few accidents when students tried to cross the road to get the transportation and they had accidents there. I remember one girl got hit by a car because it was just going so fast that they didn't see her.

The school itself, the classrooms were just kind of set next to each other. There was not an overall structure covering them. One was just like—there were three rows. One was for the principal's office; one was for classrooms; the next further apart from the classrooms was the restrooms. There was a faucet where we would just fill our cup up whenever we needed to clean our classrooms and then another row of classrooms in the background there was a classroom being built because we were running out of space.

Every morning students were in charge of cleaning the classrooms and every afternoon. There was no one really hired to clean the classrooms or anything so it was the responsibility of the students to keep their classrooms clean.

We had one teacher for every group of students. The group of students would move up grades together unless one student failed and was held back. There was no real individual parent-teacher conferences. I vaguely remember a classroom full of parents with report cards in front of them and the teacher explaining how the report cards worked. And if any parent had questions afterwards they could go and ask the teacher but there was no real structure to parent-teacher conferences.

LS: And you mentioned before that you were able to develop your math skills and not rely on a calculator like students here.

AC: Yes. I remember this instance in particular where my dad on one of his trips back to Mexico took a calculator with him. And I was fascinated with it and I asked my mom if I could use it. And she told me, "No. You cannot use the calculator unless you are verifying your answers. You will not do your homework and do big multiplications and divisions unless you're checking your answers."

And that's how I can, most of the time, not all the time, look at a multiplication problem and just do it in my head or just pick a pencil and paper and just do it really long

multiplication problem and 90% of the time get it right. Sometimes I use free style but I don't like to rely on calculators. I wasn't taught that way.

LS: And as you were growing up in Mexico your father was away most of the time and he was here in Oregon, correct?

AC: Yes. He would travel maybe once every year or six months depending on how he was doing with work. I would talk to him every so often, maybe once a month over the phone. And it was difficult when he would go visit because I wasn't used to him being around me and telling me what to do. Everything had been my mom. [If] she wanted me to do something I would do it because it was her who was always around. She was the authority figure I looked up to.

LS: So how did your father being away so much affect your relationship with him?

AC: We can't really connect very well. We connect kind of like superficially. It's a lot of things that I physically can do. He doesn't really look into how—he's curious about why I do the things I do for my homework or how I do my homework or why I need to look something up and how I'm working on that. But he doesn't really understand who I am.

LS: Can you talk again about your family's decision to move here?

AC: It was one of those times when my dad called to Mexico and to speak with my mom. I was speaking with him and he asked me if I would like to go live with him. I wanted to live with him because I never really had my father around and I wanted to see how that felt. I had just had a falling out with my two best friends and I didn't want to see them the next year in school. We lived on the same street, which kind of made it even more difficult not to see them.

So I convinced my mom and my little brother that we should come live here with my dad because it was liking an ideal, somewhere new, nobody knew me. I could really define/find myself. I could figure out who I was because in a sea of people like you, you don't really know who you are because everybody's like you. Almost everybody goes to church on Sunday, celebrates almost the same holidays and you kind of know everybody so you can't really get to know who you are until you are put in a place where you are not the same as everyone else.

LS: So how did you feel when you first moved to Oregon?

AC: A little bit excited because it was new. Everything was new and different. Then just all right. I didn't miss home because I had my parents, I had my brother. I didn't feel overwhelmed because I had them and it was fine as long as I was with them. Then as time passed by I met people. The oldest daughter of the man who we were renting from, it was an interesting relationship with her because she was my age. Whenever she was by herself [when] her cousins weren't around, I was the person she would go and talk to

and wanted to play with, but when her cousins were around I was the person that got pushed away.

LS: Was she the same age as you?

AC: Yes.

LS: Okay. Can you talk a little about school and learning English and that whole experience?

AC: I entered fifth grade and that was because the lady that was helping my mother enroll me to school, pushed for me to be entered into fifth grade. I was born in September and that year my birthday fell after the school year had started. So they were debating on whether or not to hold me back and for me to repeat fourth grade or to move to the fifth grade. They allowed me to be in fifth grade. I started with no English and I was in the ESL [English as a Second Language] class at that time. That's what it was called. And most of the people there spoke only Spanish.

By the end of that time, my fifth grade I was about first, second grade reading level. By the end of my first semester in sixth grade I was around third grade reading level. I don't remember what I ended up being in by sixth grade. Seventh grade the first semester was the last time I ever was in ESL class. And then in the second semester of seventh grade I started with regular English and then honors after that.

LS: Do you think at that point by seventh grade or so, did you think you understood and could speak English pretty well?

AC: I was still self-conscious because I did not feel like I could pronounce words correctly. I didn't have confidence in my English so I didn't feel like I had good control over it. And even now I'm still a little bit iffy because I can hear when I don't pronounce words correctly, when I can't, for the love of anything, just look at a word and just try to pronounce it.

LS: When you started making friends in school here who were you making friends with? Were they from the ESL classes as well?

AC: Yes. It was kind of difficult to make friends with them because they had been immersed in the culture in this country for about more than a year or their whole lives or something like that. But they didn't really connect to where they were from anymore. A lot of them had disconnected from being from their country of origin. And one friend in particular tried to take advantage of me because—I really don't know why she wanted to but I was just an easy target. I was new and wanted friends—hey, I was the most accessible one.

LS: So before you mentioned instances where you maybe felt discriminated against or things you couldn't participate in because of the language barrier. Could you talk about that?

AC: There were a lot of things like when we were outside of our ESL class and they put us with all the other students. And they would talk to each other waiting for the school to open. I would always be like—I would be the one furthest away from everyone because I didn't know what they were saying. I didn't understand what was going on so I stayed away from that.

Being from Mexico was a little bit—I was a little bit discriminated [against] just because of the fact I didn't know. I wasn't used to the culture here and their sense of humor. I got hurt really easily because the fact that I didn't know—nobody explained things to me. I had to learn everything on my own and people didn't really understand the fact that I still was attached to my family and I wasn't going to let them go.

LS: How often do you use Spanish now and in what settings?

AC: I speak Spanish as much as I can with my friends but I end up speaking Spanglish because that's how I've become accustomed to. At home I do my best to speak Spanish to my parents but it's not as fluent as I would like it to be. I read in Spanish. I listen to music in Spanish. I started reading in Spanish around last summer because I wanted to be more proficient with my Spanish. I don't want to lose any more. I also started writing in Spanish. I got into the habit of writing just stuff down and they turned into poems and I started writing poetry in Spanish. And so to enhance my writing in Spanish I started reading in Spanish. But speaking-wise it's just with a few friends that speak Spanish. I understand Spanish and can understand what I'm saying.

LS: You mention with writing poetry, do you feel that maybe when you're speaking or using Spanish it's a little bit different frame of mind or is it all the same to you, just two different languages?

AC: Different. When I started writing poetry in Spanish I discovered I could do a lot more because I could describe things a lot easier. I could get more specific or more broad with Spanish. I didn't have to—there was not as many restrictions as with English because—even though I don't speak it as much, even if I don't read it, I don't do a lot in Spanish, I still have the foundation of kindergarten to fourth grade of the variety of words. Like I know really long words and really descriptive words in Spanish that I could not know in English.

LS: And do you watch Spanish language television and movies?

AC: Movies, like really, really, really old movies made in the U.S. I only watch them in Spanish. I've tried to watch them in English and I can't watch them. I can't sit through a movie made in 1960s or '70s when it's made in English, in English. I just can't. I can

watch it in Spanish if it's not original in which it was made in. But most of the movies I watch with my family, with my mother especially I watch them in Spanish.

A few of the shows I watch are in English. I watch cartoons still, and yes I watch them in English. Soap operas, Mexican soap operas kind of. It depends if they are on when I'm in the living room. When my mother's soap opera is on you can't change the channel, but that's rarely.

LS: And in terms of what you read?

AC: I started reading Paulo Coelho. The Spanish version of one of his books and then I started looking at more books. I really liked one called *La Isla de los Amores Eternos*. That one is by Daina. I can't remember his last name right now. But I like just reading books in Spanish that were not originally in English. Like that is one of the criteria when I'm reading a book in Spanish because when it's from English to Spanish I can see how words were translated and I don't like doing that. I like to read a book and be like this was written by the person in their first language. Of course—Paulo Coelho—I can't read Portuguese, so that would not make any sense.

But some books I feel like reading a book in Spanish that was written by the author in Spanish is more—I understand it better than if I read a book that was translated from English to Spanish.

LS: Okay. Maybe because with the original you can tell what the author's intent is. It's all their word choices. So you mention watching programs with your mother in Spanish. Is that because she has trouble in English or you just prefer?

AC: I just feel like it's better for her because she can understand a full movie in Spanish better than she could ever do it in English. But I don't want her to feel left out. And I don't want her to lose her Spanish because she can't speak English and she wants to speak English. I understand that but at the same time I don't want her to get so caught up in wanting to learn English that she forgets that Spanish is her first language.

LS: And then your father, does he watch programs in English or in Spanish?

AC: He watches a lot of the Nature channel and in Spanish. There are a few shows he watches it in English. He understands more English than my mother because his bosses speak English and two other of his co-workers speak English as well. So he has been more exposed to English than my mother has.

LS: And that's because of his work but also being here longer.

AC: Yeah, more than 20 years he's been coming to and from Oregon.

LS: Right. And can you talk about your brothers and their use of Spanish?

AC: It's almost as if it was their second language. The oldest one understands more Spanish than the youngest one. But they don't use it. They don't read it. They don't hear it as much in order for them to keep us intact as much as possible and to keep going with it and speaking it fluently.

LS: Does your family honor practices and holidays from Mexico that most people here don't do?

AC: We celebrate Nochebuena, Christmas Eve. We don't celebrate Christmas. New Year's Eve is just another evening. We celebrate a lot of the Catholic holidays and we don't celebrate Cinco de Mayo. We don't celebrate Independence Day all that much. I don't think we've ever celebrated the Mexican Independence Day. We don't celebrate a lot of the holidays celebrated in the U.S. We celebrate Mother's Day on May 10th.

LS: Mother's Day is one Mexican celebration. It sounds like that nationally is very important.

AC: I don't know nationally. I know that where I was from that was the biggest day that school pushed students to celebrate. Unlike Father's Day, Father's Day in Mexico also changes dates, but Mother's Day was always May 10th and that's always one of those days for my family. I told the youngest ones we celebrate May 10th because we are Mexican and just because we're not in Mexico does not mean that we don't celebrate it on May 10th.

LS: I think you were saying before that some of the celebrations, holidays that people associate with Mexico like Independence Day or Cinco de Mayo, they're regional rather than national.

AC: Yes. It depends on how the background is because not everybody is going to celebrate. Like Cinco de Mayo is for Puebla. Independence Day is mostly the State of Mexico. It depends region to region and how much each family wants to celebrate it.

LS: Does your family participate in any holiday or cultural activities with the larger community here?

AC: There is one that's hosted by Centro Cultural, Children's Day. Of course it's not celebrated the day it should be. In Mexico it's April 30 but usually it's just celebrated on a Saturday at the end of April. And that's about it.

LS: So when we spoke before you talked about your parents being close with certain relatives. Do you feel close with any relatives in Mexico and do you talk to them regularly?

AC: That would be my dad's sister in Mexico and my mother's mom. I feel closest to those two people because I spend more time with them and got to know them and they

got to know me. It was just a closer relationship that was formed when I was in Mexico with them.

LS: And have you been able to go back to visit?

AC: No, not at all.

LS: If you had the opportunity to go back to Mexico would you and what would you do there?

AC: I would go back. I would like to—first I would go visit my family in Michoacán. And then I would travel around a little bit because when we lived in Mexico I didn't have the liberty of traveling all that much. We did go to a few close places by but not to get to know all of Mexico. I would like to go and maybe learn a dialect or two.

LS: And is that one of the indigenous languages you're referring to?

AC: Yes. There are so many and the only one that I remember is because I've heard a lot is Zapoteco but I'm not sure where it's from, like from Mexico.

LS: And where have you heard that?

AC: My parents. My dad from what I understood of the bits and pieces he's spoken about what he did when he was younger. He traveled around Michoacán quite a bit and he would say that's one of the dialects that quite a few people know about and I don't know if they know it but I know that it's one of the most common ones.

LS: And have you met people here that are indigenous that spoke a different language other than Spanish as their first language?

AC: Yes. A classmate, I think it was in fifth or sixth grade when I met him, Spanish was his second language and English was his third. I don't remember where he was from. Then a child when I was going home he said that his grandfather was teaching him a dialect. I can't remember which dialect it was—on the MAX. I've heard both speaking dialects. But I can't say they were from Mexico or not because there's a lot of dialects in South America.

LS: Are many of your friends from Mexico or do they have Mexican ancestry?

AC: Yes. There're some people who are directly from Mexico and others that are first generation born here.

LS: The Mexican and Mexican-American community in this area has grown a lot over the last few decades. If you were asked to describe what that community's like from your experiences what would you be able to say about it?

AC: Distant. The only place that comes to mind where I would see a lot of Mexicans gathered together is during the summer there's soccer tournaments that go around the area. And so the games happen at the Tom McCall, the soccer fields there. And that is probably one of the places that I've seen the largest number of Mexicans around.

There's also the swap meet past WINCO. I don't know exactly where it is, the exact address but I've seen quite a few there. But as to say that they're tightly knit I haven't experienced it—maybe because my parents don't really know how to connect with people in a community like that.

LS: How about the sense of community at the church your family attends?

AC: Only at the church because there's been times when I see—people I see at church I see outside of church and I recognize them. I think I feel like they feel like recognize me but it's just like—I don't know how to explain it. Because I've noticed that a lot with my parents because I was taught if somebody says they're going to do something don't really expect them to do it. And that tends to go all around because I've noticed that my parents kind of say things so as not to hurt people's feelings or not say "no" or "that's not possible", they kind of say, "Oh yeah later." And that later never really happens.

So I think it's more of a perception that because you know people from your country that everyone in from Mexico is the same. And my encounter has been that if somebody says they're going to do it, don't just let it slide and not tell them they said they're going to do it until you get an outright no. That's where I learned the disconnect comes between my parents and me because if I say "no" it literally means no. And if I say I'm going to do something, it may take me awhile but I'll do it. And I think that carries on throughout the community as well.

LS: What terms would you use to describe your identity?

AC: I use three in particular—latina, mexicana, and mestiza because they all describe my background and the fact that I am a woman.

LS: And how important is being a woman and taking pride in that to you?

AC: Really important because it is a part of who I am. I would not be me if I was not a woman. I was taught I had my grandmother, my mother's mom and my aunt, my mother's older sister and my mother to really help me take pride in being a woman and the fact that just because I'm a woman does not mean that I can't do a lot of the things men can. That's one of the strong forces that pushes to be physically strong and to finish my school and to challenge myself.

LS: Do you feel that having lived here since you were about ten, does Oregon feel like home to you?

AC: No. It does not feel like home. It's just another place I'm living at. I never really had a feeling of home. Home was always with my mom and the oldest of my brothers. I really don't know what people mean when they say a location is a home because my home is with my family. I always carry them with me. Doesn't matter if I'm not with them, they're still my home. Oregon is a nice place to live. I have my house, but my home is my family.

LS: So back to your family. What sort of work have your parents done and what are they doing now?

AC: My father has—the first few years he was living in Oregon he did kind of like plant nursery or picking fruit I think. Now for more than ten years he's been working at fixing the palettes used for transportation. My mom when we first arrived here she would babysit for a cousin and an acquaintance. Then about six, seven years ago she started working at plant nursery and that's where she's been since.

LS: What sort of education did the both of them receive?

AC: My dad only received up to second grade. Since then he has always done manual labor. My mom [went] to sixth grade. She chose not to go to middle school in order to let her younger siblings go to school.

LS: And how have your parents viewed your own decisions to pursue an education?

AC: They've supported as much as they can. They don't ask me to do as much as they used to. When I was in high school and middle school they would ask me to babysit, clean the house, cook for my brothers. But now they just ask me that I let them know what I am doing and when I'm coming home. And if they ask me if I can help them they just require me to tell them straight out yes or no. And if I can, I do. If I can't they'll figure something out. But they've been supportive as they...see, they understand.

LS: Do your brothers have plans for their futures as well?

AC: The oldest one he's going to be a junior and he's started looking at universities. And he started asking me if I think it's better to go to PCC [Portland Community College] or four year university. He started asking me about scholarships so his plan is to keep going after to post secondary school. And right now he's looking for a job to save up money. The youngest one, he's going to be a fourth grader. I don't know what his thoughts of university or college are. But he might go because it's like me going and then the oldest one going. So maybe by default he'll go but he's still up in the air about what he likes and what he doesn't like.

LS: How important is the Mexican identity to your parents and to your siblings, do you think?

AC: My siblings, I think they are disconnected. The oldest one was about five, he turned six when we arrived here. So he understands that he's proud of not being from the U.S., of the fact that he's from another country, the fact that he's not like everybody else. But it's not that deeply ingrained as it is in my parents or in me because he doesn't remember as much as my parents and I do. The youngest one he describes himself as Mexican American not as Mexican because he was born here, so therefore he's Mexican American and not Mexican.

LS: So let's talk about your plans. What are you in school for right now?

AC: I'll be receiving my Associates Degree of Arts from Oregon Transfer [Associate of Arts Oregon Transfer Degree (AAOT)] with a focus in science. Once I get to PSU [Portland State University] this upcoming fall I'll be a biochemistry major with a minor in Japanese language. And I want to go into research. I want my PhD in biochemistry. I just want to keep going as far as I can.

When I was in high school and found out that after high school that was it unless you could pay out of pocket to keep going to school. I actually didn't really think that you could keep going to school until my fifth grade teacher was like, "Yeah you can keep going to school."

And once I got to high school I want to keep going to school. That's the one thing I know for sure I'm good at. I'm not the best at school but I am good at it enough that I can keep learning and I like to learn. And getting my PhD would just extend the time I'm in school and learning. And I want to do research in the biochemistry field. Just general research, I don't really care for, or have anything against, the medical field. If that's where I'm going to be doing research for that's fine or if I find research somewhere else, that's fine as well. I'm open to possibilities. I just know I want to do research.

LS: Do you think the women in your life, your mother, your aunt, your grandmother as role models, as strong women, did they motivate you to continue with school? Do you think they're an example or was it something that you felt for yourself?

AC: When I was little I played around with the idea of being a teacher or a nurse. And my mother at first wanted me to be a nurse. And I gave it a shot. I took anatomy and physiology classes. My mentality was, if I'm going to be a nurse I'm going to have to take these classes and I have to like these classes and you do good in these classes to get to be a nurse. Nursing didn't work out for me so that was out.

What really motivated me was that I found something that I liked. I liked chemistry and I liked biology. I didn't want to choose between both of them so I chose in between. But really what drove me to keep going and choose something as biochemistry— everyone I told, "I'm a biochemistry major" kind of treats me like, "Wow that's hard." They can't visually see someone being a biochemistry major. That was one of the things that really motivated me because it wasn't easy. You are required to know math, chemistry, biology. That's what's required.

And once I found out that I liked biochemistry, even though I didn't know what it was in my Junior year I just decided, I'm going for biochemistry. I have no idea what it is. I have no idea what it entails but it was enough of a mystery that it would never be boring. It was always going to be challenging because there's just not one thing in front of you that says this is what happens.

And the fact that my mother didn't finish her schooling and the fact that my dad didn't finish his schooling really pushes me to be like—I have the opportunity. I have the means. I have the privilege to keep going to school. And they didn't. So I'm not going to waste my privilege. Just not go to school when they didn't have the privilege of going to school. I have it so I'm going to use it. And then once I'm there I'll carry them out with me because that is one of the things that I really gone for that I won't leave my family behind. They've supported me. They've helped me.

When I was in high school they never asked me to get a job. They didn't ask me to stop my homework and help them out or do the cleaning. They were, "Once you're done with your homework, can you do this?" And that's when I did it. Not before or after. It was just like I just wanted this because I want to show them that what they sacrificed isn't something I'm just wasting. It's something I'm using. And I want to help them out, too.

LS: Do you feel like they appreciate that effort on your part to continue with your education?

AC: I don't know if they appreciate it. They're proud of it. They don't say it outright. I had to hear from a neighbor's wife, the wife of a neighbor that my dad was proud that I was a valedictorian when I graduated from high school. I had no idea he was proud. I had no idea that he felt something that—I was ecstatic. I was going to be valedictorian of high school and the fact that I gave a speech in front of my graduating class.

But they're proud. I know that because my mother said it not directly to me but she said it to my dad not that long ago. And we're not the family that will say, "Oh I love you" or "I'm proud of you" or "Good job" or "You're doing good." We're not a family that says that so it's difficult to know what they're feeling towards what I'm doing. But I do know that they're happy that I found something that I'm happy with and that just pursuing because I want to, not because I have to, and it's not going to be something as labor intensive as what they're doing. Because my mom said, "I do not want her working out in the fields."

LS: So you're going to start at Portland State in the fall and then you're going to be in Portland this summer as well for work or research.

AC: Yeah an internship with OHSU [Oregon Health & Science University]. My mentor is going to be—I'm not completely sure what I'm going to be doing but it's going to be under the behavioral and neuroscience umbrella with them. And I'm excited. I'm going to be doing laboratory research and stuff.

LS: So being in Portland, do you think that will be difficult to be even that far away from home?

AC: I don't think so because my plan is maybe every weekend I come home because I know my mom and I don't know how she's going to take it. I don't want to be just gone then come back. I just want to kind of ease it, the fact that I'm leaving because I've spoken with her and I told her that one way or another I'm going to be going to Japan. It's either going to be to study there in my field or to work there. And I just want to ease the fact that I'm going to be gone for whoever knows how long. I don't know if I can keep constant contact with her but I don't want to just—because she has been the authority figure. I always made sure I include [her] in my plans. I don't want to just be like, Okay I'm gone and bye-bye. So it may not be as difficult for me as it's going to be for her. But yeah I'm going to call her as much as I can and come visit her at least once a week.

LS: So you have plans of going to Japan at some point which—obviously you've studied Japanese. Do you think maybe exploring or traveling is important to you or is it more to learn the language?

AC: Explore. I want to see things that are not usually around here. I really like the fact that there're people out there who keep their culture and tradition. Because it's been something important to me that I keep my culture and my tradition and I don't toss it out because I have sacrificing for my education and for friends. And I also like the fact that it's just another language and you meet different people and you can talk to them in their own language that they can understand you and that you can understand them.

At the beginning of April I went to a workshop where we were given the opportunity to speak in our own language. And when I spoke in Spanish about the topic I had I felt that I could describe myself better. That I could communicate better what I was feeling. And that's really important to me that I can just communicate what my thoughts are a lot easier. I feel like for one Japan has the technology there. It's good to advance in my field so that's one of the pluses, that if I go study there I get good experience working with other people and that I can advance in whatever research I end up doing. And also how their culture has changed the people there and how it has moved forward without forgetting the past because it's something different.

In middle school I had the choices of either learning French, Spanish for Spanish speakers, or Japanese. I felt like too many people were going towards French and I didn't feel attracted to it. Spanish I knew enough. Japanese was a completely different language and that has opened up the doors for me to think that, well what if I want to learn Latin, Greek, Portuguese, Italian, Russian, Mandarin or any other language. And just the fact the thought of learning different language has appealed to me since middle school.

LS: So even though your own culture from Mexico is very important to you it sounds like you're curious as well about other cultures. I see.

So if you come into a PhD program maybe even not in another country but far away from Oregon, do you think, would that be difficult for you to be away from your family?

AC: It would be but I would move. I would take the opportunity nonetheless. It would be difficult for them to understand why I am moving because they still haven't wrapped their heads around the fact that if you have a job opening you move. If it's a good pay and all that then you do it because you want the experience and you want to see different places. It would be difficult because I've never really been that far away from family but now there's the cell phone. I'll call them.

LS: Do you think your father might be able to understand since he was away from your family for work as well?

AC: He might but I'm not completely sure. It's something that, I wouldn't know how to bring it up and I don't know if he would be able to speak about it.

LS: I think that covers all my questions. Did you have anything else that we didn't cover?

AC: No.

LS: All right. I think that concludes the interview. Thank you very much.

AC: Okay. You're welcome.

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